

BOOK REVIEW

Thomas Campbell. *My Big TOE: A Trilogy Unifying Philosophy, Physics, and Metaphysics*. Book 1, *Awakening* (288 pp.); Book 2, *Discovery* (376 pp.); Book 3, *Inner Workings* (232 pp.). U.S.: Lightning Strike Books, 2003. \$38.50 (hardcover); \$33.50 (paperback); \$25.50 (paperback, 3 vols. in 1).

Reviewed by Matthew Fike, PhD

The “TOE” in the title of Thomas Campbell’s trilogy means Theory Of Everything: not only the philosophy, physics, and metaphysics mentioned in the subtitle but also the other physical sciences, the social sciences, mathematics, computer science, mind and matter, the normal and the paranormal. “It is the task of this trilogy,” he writes, “to clearly and completely construct your consciousness, your world, your science, and your existence in a general, logical, scientific way that comprehensively explains **all** the personal and professional data you have collected during a lifetime” (author’s emphasis). Less formally, *My Big TOE* is a “Reality 101” course, which presents a scientific basis for psi phenomena in a comprehensive pattern of cosmic unfolding. Although Campbell does not incorporate any data from psi research (the TOE is an objective edifice built on a foundation of his own subjective paranormal experiences), he successfully demonstrates the conclusion that “you are an individuated portion of a larger fractal pattern that constitutes All That Is within a digital virtual reality based upon evolving consciousness. . . .”

Each of the three volumes—*Awakening*, *Discovery*, and *Inner Workings*—is divided into two sections. Book 1 presents background on the author (physicist, psychic explorer) and then, in a section called “The Foundations of Reality,” cautions against “belief traps” and introduces many of the basic concepts that the other volumes develop. Book 2 constitutes the main part of the TOE, which is summarized below. Book 3 discusses the mechanics of nonphysical reality, examines individual types of psychic functioning in light of the Big Picture, and caps off the trilogy by demonstrating that the TOE is in harmony with what Einstein and other thinkers imagined but did not completely formulate.

The author’s account of his early years is by far the most engaging section. Campbell learned Transcendental MeditationSM while a graduate student in physics, and meditation not only helped him perform his academic work with greater ease and speed but also opened up a new reality for him. He developed, for example, the ability to see auras and to live in physical and nonphysical reality at the same time. Meditation thus led to a rebirth of the psi ability that he had enjoyed as a boy and later led him to Robert Monroe. Campbell’s account of his contribution to Monroe’s Whistlefield laboratory—he is the “TC (physicist)” mentioned in *Far Journeys*—is particularly valuable because it underscores the major assistance that Monroe

received from scientists. Campbell and an electrical engineer named Dennis Mennerich were instrumental in helping Monroe set up his lab; it was Mennerich who gave him Gerald Oster's article, "Auditory Beats in the Brain" (*Scientific American*, October 1973), which led to Hemi-Sync® and The Monroe Institute®; and Campbell and Mennerich played a key role as trainers in Monroe's first courses.

The substance of Campbell's TOE begins with two important assumptions: consciousness and evolution. He does not know where primordial consciousness or the One Source or Absolute Unbounded Oneness (AUO) came from, but he states that it is "the fundamental [digital] energy that is the media [*sic*] of reality." Evolution, the Fundamental Process of trial and error or what Campbell more colloquially calls "bootstrapping," moves toward greater "profitability" by increasing consciousness and decreasing entropy. These two assumptions reflect the limitations of Einstein's approach and suggest why he failed to create a Big TOE. In attempting to paint a Big Picture with Little Picture mathematics, he missed the fact that the fundamental field is nonphysical, consists of consciousness, transcends and encompasses space-time, and is digital.

When AUO realizes that it can change itself in the direction of greater awareness, evolution takes over and produces a series of fractals (defined by dictionary.com as "a geometric pattern that is repeated at ever smaller scales"; so as in a hologram, a part contains a pattern of the whole). AUO evolves Absolute Unbounded Manifold (AUM), which is "aware, active, purposeful" and constitutes a "brilliant love consciousness." From here, evolution leads to the Even Bigger Computer, The Big Computer (TBC), multiple nonphysical-matter realities (NPMR), a subset called NPMR, Our System, physical-matter reality (PMR, where space-time exists with its various rules such as the speed of light), the Earth, human beings, computers, and (probably someday) computers designed and created by computers. In other words, these stages of consciousness development are "stacked simultaneous virtual realities each in their [*sic*] own dimension." Homologies abound (AUM is to us as we are to computers, etc.).

The purpose of evolution in this fractal system is the development of consciousness. AUM evolved us to enhance the quality of its consciousness, and we come to PMR to evolve our own. To that end, we must engage our free will to move us away from lower-energy-consciousness states (ignorance, fear, ego) toward higher-energy-consciousness states (knowledge, wisdom, love). PMR is a great place for humans to achieve this kind of spiritual growth because choices result in feedback/consequences. Meanwhile, our oversouls stay in NPMR, provide guidance, and record every action, thought, and emotion (think life review). In addition, the digital nature of consciousness enables our minds to travel between dimensions, investigate alternative pasts and futures in TBC, communicate instantaneously on the Reality Wide Web (RWW), and manifest a variety of other psi phenomena. The "psi uncertainty principle," however, makes psychic experiences hard to validate from a scientific standpoint because it "masks the causal mechanics and denies the efficacy and perfect repeatability of

psi effects.” As a result, the psi uncertainty principle maintains PMR’s “growth-optimizing balance.”

On a journey through this difficult material, the reader will encounter a variety of unusual and helpful features in Campbell’s trilogy. Each volume contains the same table of contents, preface, and foreword (two-thirds of the table of contents is dimly printed so that a given volume’s material stands out). The chapters include asides (in a different font and marked with arrowheads) that stand in for footnotes, give the reader a break from the heavy going, and provide helpful analogies or illustrations. A summary of previous volume(s) appears at the beginning of volumes 2 and 3. And the trilogy’s Web site, where readers can participate in a discussion group, e-mail the author, or report problems with the books, is printed at the bottom of every page (<http://www.My-Big-TOE.com>).

An even more unusual feature is that Campbell works hard to create his readers. The typical reader, who is a nonscientist with an analytical Western mind, needs linear argumentation in order to accept the TOE’s conclusion about evolving consciousness. Campbell counsels the reader to shed belief traps and to embrace open-minded skepticism, patience, hard work, and determination over time. Most of all, he creates a reader who is an interlocutor. Because of the sometimes borderline-technical nature of the material, the text is often conversational: Campbell anticipates the reader’s questions, objections, fatigue, and need for summary and recapitulation.

All of this is to the good, but the trilogy does not always rise to the high standard that it seeks to achieve. As one might expect in a self-published series, there are lower-order errors throughout the three volumes. These include occasional spelling mistakes, regular omission of hyphens and apostrophes, frequent comma splices, and (especially annoying) omnipresent subject-verb agreement errors. The most embarrassing lower-order error for the physicist-author appears in the key to abbreviations in book 1, where C , the speed of light, is defined as 186,000 miles per *hour*.

On the higher order, a series that purports to develop a “theory of everything,” but does not do so, fails to fulfill its fundamental objective. Unfortunately, the latter is the case in the TOE trilogy. Consider the contradictions in Campbell’s treatment of religion. He condescendingly equates religion’s substantive contribution to believers’ consciousness with “giving a starving person a rubber chicken,” and he dismisses the notion that religious organizations can help their members reduce the entropy of their consciousness as, “for the most part, wishful thinking.” For Campbell, religion is all about “ritual, dogma, closed-mindedness, hate, and violence”—all functions of the ego. But how can such negativity be the final word if religion espouses love, which is the author’s definition of high-quality consciousness? And what about the unacknowledged similarities between the TOE and religious formulations? For example, if NPMR has a CEO whom Campbell dubs The Big Cheese, if there are guides who help us and

“negative beings that can lead us to ruin,” and if human beings “are created in AUM’s image,” how are these details not analogous, respectively, to God, angels, demons, and the notion that human beings are created in God’s image? These analogies illustrate principles that Campbell eventually affirms—the “wonderful wisdom and insight that flows [sic] from the great religions and spiritual traditions of the world” and the fact that “all spiritual paths converge on the same absolute truths by means of reducing ego and fear.” But after criticizing and dismissing religion’s contribution to consciousness and excluding religion from the TOE, Campbell’s claim—that the trilogy provides “a sound theoretical basis for understanding . . . theological . . . enigmas,” as if religion has been part of the TOE all along—rings a bit false. This aporia suggests that the author succumbs to the belief trap that he counsels readers to eschew. Although he ultimately reaches the right conclusion, it is unsupported by argument and undermined by his earlier prejudices. If “Uncle Tom,” the Big TOE Guy, can fall prey to such belief perseverance, surely the rest of us have plenty of impediments to overcome.

My Big TOE may not be perfectly written or completely consistent, but Campbell has some important things to teach us about evolving our consciousness to the point where psi phenomena begin to happen. Given our connection through mind to NPMR, the key task is to begin to shift from intellectual awareness that comes, say, from reading My Big TOE, to personal experience through meditation (book 1, chapter 23, provides an excellent set of instructions). Campbell espouses a “consistent plodding in the generally right direction,” not drug use to leap ahead prematurely. If one meditates and makes consciousness-enhancing, entropy-reducing choices, improved consciousness/being will eventually yield psi effects as a byproduct. After exploring NPMR in small increments, one can then enjoy “tasting the pudding,” which means applying objective measures to one’s own subjective experience—a fractal, as it were, of Campbell’s procedure in My Big TOE. Finally, the last thing that the author wants is for us to regard him as a guru; so as the trilogy comes to a close, he leaves us with advice that sounds much like his mentor, Monroe: “At the core, you are consciousness: you have access to all the answers—go find them for yourself and they will make you whole.”

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